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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PARM](#) [MOPS](#) [IR](#) [IZ](#) [AE](#)  
SUBJECT: UAE APPRECIATES AMBASSADOR CROCKER'S ENGAGEMENT ON  
IRAQ

Classified by Ambassador Michele Sison, reasons 1.4 (b) and  
(d).

Summary

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11. (S) Ambassador Crocker met November 1 with UAE Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed (AbZ) and Deputy Prime Minister Hamdan bin Zayed al-Nahyan. Both expressed appreciation for USG engagement on Iraq and the Ambassador's visit to consult with them. Crocker told the UAE leaders he had come not only to talk but to listen. He delivered a direct message about the expanded space created for political progress in light of security gains in Iraq, called on the UAE and its Arab colleagues to help reinforce the Arab identity of Iraq with deeper engagement of both Shia and Sunni, and urged the return of a UAE ambassador to Baghdad. Both AbZ and Hamdan cited the dangers of Iranian influence and said they had little trust or faith in the Maliki government. AbZ blamed poor Iraqi coordination for lack of progress on a Maliki visit or a new UAE embassy in Iraq. He said the UAE would be disinclined to move on debt relief with the current Iraqi government. Crocker told them it was important to look beyond individuals. This was a time when the future of Iraq was being shaped -- for better or worse -- for a long time to come. It was important that the Arab countries be there, not only to shore up Iraq's Arab affiliation and counter Iranian influence, but also to help speed the process of reconciliation and prevent Iraq from again becoming a long-term threat to the region or a source of instability. End summary.

The Challenge of Deepening UAEG-GoI Engagement

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12. (S) Ambassador Crocker met November 1 with UAE Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed (AbZ) and Deputy Prime Minister Hamdan bin Zayed al-Nahyan. Both expressed appreciation for USG engagement on Iraq and the Ambassador's visit, adding that they hoped it would be an ongoing process. Crocker welcomed that prospect, and told the UAE leaders he had come not only to talk but to listen. AbZ said the UAE wants to help in Iraq but feared its attempts to assist are often misunderstood, as was the UAE's request that PM al-Maliki find a non-weekend date for a proposed recent visit. The GoI had not responded when asked to propose alternative dates. DPM Hamdan said the UAE leadership had tasked him to contact Maliki personally to clear the air and deliver an invitation to visit. Maliki, however, would not take the call, and Hamdan was referred to the PM's office director. "So as far as we are concerned this is their problem," he said. "We have no trust or faith in this person." AbZ also said the UAEG had tried for months to coordinate a suitable location for opening an embassy in Baghdad. A site near the Iraqi MFA

shown to a UAE survey team in August was unsuitable for "many reasons" (to include security), and AbZ was concerned that the GoI was not following up on the UAEG's request to offer alternatives. However, both Hamdan and Abdullah confirmed that the UAE would be willing to send an ambassador to Iraq if a suitable International Zone location can be identified and security concerns addressed.

13. (S) Crocker stressed the importance of Arab engagement with the GoI and said the USG was prepared to help in any way it could in reestablishing a UAE diplomatic presence. AbZ bluntly said the UAEG would not look into debt relief with the current government, until it was more convinced that the government was prepared to deliver services equally to all of its citizens. Crocker stressed that debt relief is not about PM al-Maliki, but about helping build government institutions that can work on behalf of the entire nation.

14. (S) Noting that the GoI had been unpleasant about six-party talks (involving Egypt, Turkey, Jordan, UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait); AbZ wondered about the merits of inviting Iraq to present its case to the forum directly. Crocker cautioned that the meetings of the group of six, combined with the relative lack of Arab diplomatic contact, contribute to GoI fears of Arab plotting against the current order. He said Iraq should be included in a "group of seven" if the forum was to continue at all. AbZ balked at that, but said a "six plus one" format might offer the GoI a platform to make its case, if a credible Iraqi participant could be found -- not the likes of Muwafaq al-Rubai, who had heard many positive messages in his June visit to the UAE but did not convey any of it to his government, according to AbZ. Crocker said it might be best to just not convene the group of six until a GoI role could be thoughtfully considered. On a related issue, Crocker told Hamdan and Abdullah that the

GCC might wish to consider a strategic discussion, at its December 3 summit in Doha, about the role of the organization in the security of the region, and in particular its future relationship with Iraq.

15. (S) Hamdan asked Crocker if he had a message for the president, Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed. Crocker said the message was that we value greatly our relations with the UAE. Iraq is a huge challenge for both of us. It involves Iran, but it also involves the future of the region. We appreciate very much the thoughts of Abdullah and Hamdan. We have an opportunity now that we didn't have six months ago. We need to consider how to use this opportunity so that Iraq does not again become a threat to the region or a source of instability. It is important for Iraq's Arab neighbors to support and reinforce Iraq's Arab identity. The US can't do this, we have a lot of responsibilities, but Iraq's Arab identity can only be supported effectively by the Arabs.

16. (S) Crocker said some of the Iraqi government's actions, and Maliki's actions, may well seem unreasonable. He knew very well the ups and downs of dealing with the Iraqi leadership; he did it every day. But it was important to remember that this response was born of fear, including the fear of Arab intentions. A more active Arab role can reduce those fears and help speed the process of reconciliation. We need to look beyond Maliki or other individuals. Prime ministers come and go. We need to work together, and with the GOI, to improve Iraqi government capabilities, build institutions, and deliver services. What we do now will affect the course of events for the next 15-20 years. For our part, we expect that Maliki will continue to reach out, as he has with the citizens of Anbar province, in Baghdad, and with Salah al-Din province. We will continue to encourage this.

17. (S) Hamdan responded that his father, former UAE ruler Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan al-Nahyan, had instructed before his death that it was essential that the Arab countries stand by Iraq at this moment in history. The UAE was pushing others in the GCC in this direction, and working with Egypt, Jordan and Turkey (not Syria, he said, because there was no trust there.) This was because if what happens in Iraq spills

over, it could affect them all. So it was essential to strengthen our coordination, eliminate the militias and al-Qaeda, and bring together the Sunnis, Shia and Kurds. This was the only solution, and Iraq could not be neglected. Iran was a clear and present danger. He noted that Sheikh Zayed had strong, historical ties to many tribal leaders -- Sunni and Shia, as well as Kurds -- relations different from the tribal connections of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. The UAE could exert some influence with those tribal leaders, if that would be useful.

#### Reconciling Tensions Within and Around Iraq

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¶8. (S) AbZ questioned both the yardstick used to identify candidates for de-Ba'athification and U.S. commitment to reform, offering the "Arab impression" that the USG was more interested in hydrocarbons legislation than reconciliation. Crocker countered that USG interest in a hydrocarbons law is not about oil, but about reconciliation, and that in fact USG urging on de-Ba'athification reform would hopefully lead to passage of a new law soon. Both legislative priorities are important due to their implications for national reconciliation. Citing escalation of Turkey-Kurdish tension as a concern, AbZ said it is not the right time for a referendum on Kirkuk. Crocker said the USG has cautioned Turkey not to succumb to PKK provocation and has encouraged the KRG to do more against the PKK.

¶9. (S) The Foreign Minister said VP Tariq al-Hashemi is linked to the Muslim Brothers and is not trusted in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, or Jordan, "even if they say otherwise." He questioned whether a secular Sunni leader might emerge. Crocker replied that VP al-Hashemi might at most be called Muslim Brother lite, with emphasis on the lite. Anbari sheikhs were showing some leadership potential, said Crocker. Recalling his early assessments of fear as a key factor in Iraqi politics, Crocker noted that the Shia fear the past and the possible return of a Sunni Ba'athist regime, the Sunni fear the future and the loss of influence, and the Kurds fear elements of the past and the future. Deeper Arab engagement could ease these fears and increase prospects for reconciliation.

#### Reinforcing Iraq's Arab Identity -- Countering Iran

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¶10. (S) Acknowledging some progress on security and humanitarian issues, AbZ nonetheless said the UAEG continued to believe that Iran has the means to make life harder for Iraq and the U.S. if it so chooses. He queried what the results might be if the Iraqi Shia were polled about the Iranian nuclear program and the ongoing dispute between Tehran and the West; he assumed we would find few friends in the Iraqi Shia community on that issue. Crocker, on the other hand, suggested that most Iraqis did not want a nuclear neighbor, nor a military confrontation between the U.S. and Iran. Iran does not have the ability to impose solutions, but can do much to damage and disrupt, said Crocker. AbZ asked who Iran used to carry out operations within Iraq, to which Crocker noted that even elements of the Saddam Feddayin had signed up to lend their thuggish services to JAM and Iran, just as they had for Saddam. Iran's Quds Force had also infiltrated Lebanese Hizballah elements to train JAM forces -- clearly fighting in Iraq as part of a broad regional strategy.

¶11. (S) Asked about the utility of Arab engagement with Moqtada al-Sadr (purportedly to give him an alternative to Iran), Crocker suggested the Arabs engage PM Maliki first and expand their efforts from that point. In the long run, pulling the originally anti-West and anti-Persian al-Sadr movement away from Iran and back to its Arab Iraqi roots would be a positive development. As for Ammar al-Hakim, AbZ referred to the presumed heir of ISCI as so corrupt he had become known as "Uday Hakim," linking him to Uday Saddam Hussein, the former dictator's twisted heir.

## Humanitarian support

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¶12. (C) Also head of the UAE Red Crescent Society, Hamdan stressed that the UAE had been active in assisting Iraq -- citing the Zayed Hospital in Baghdad and a water purification plant as examples. The UAE would not neglect Iraq's needs, he said, adding that the UAE Red Crescent has given considerable support to projects in Anbar, Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra. The Red Crescent would also like to consider a joint project in Iraq with the International Committee for the Red Cross, according to Hamdan.

## Keeping al-Qaeda on the Defensive

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¶13. (S) Crocker stated that while al-Qaeda had been hurt in Iraq and was on the defensive, it had proven its resilience and it was premature to consider it defeated. At the same time, it was worth noting that Iraq had been the first Arab country where al-Qaeda had gained a foothold, and it had lost the gains it had made because it had lost the people. AbZ picked up on this, emphasizing that al-Qaeda was increasingly seen in the Arab world as barbaric, inhumane, and un-Islamic.

He said he wished this was acknowledged more in the Arab world, but the organization had lost many supporters by its behavior in Iraq and its leaders now realized they had made a strategic mistake, not only in Iraq but in the Arab world. Crocker said he hoped the UAE and other Arab leaders would find a way to expand on that message, because it was a striking rebuke when people not only turn on al-Qaeda, but are willing to pay with their lives for the decision.

¶14. (C) Crocker said the return of foreign fighters to their home countries from Iraq was a region-wide threat and the best way to prevent this was to keep them from going in the first place. He understood there had been comparatively few Emiratis among the foreign fighters detained, but said we would be grateful for anything the UAE could do with Syria. Abdullah said he thought Syria was changing. Crocker said there had been some signs, but it was still a problem.

¶15. (U) Ambassador Crocker approved this message.  
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